

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 05434 091906Z
ACTION ARA-14

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/042 W

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O 091602Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8424

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 5434

STADIS//////////

ARA/AND PLEASE PASS AMBASSADOR ASECIO FROM CHARGE

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CM
SUBJECT: DISCUSSIONS WITH TURBAY ON AID PROGRAM

1. AID DIRECTOR MEGELLAS TOLD ME THIS MORNING THAT CLOSE ASSOCIATES OF JULIO CESAR TURBAY WISHED TO ARRANGE A MEETING BETWEEN MEGELLAS AND TURBAY FOR LATER TODAY. MEGELLAS' OPINION IS THAT MEETING IS LARGELY THE IDEA OF THESE ASSOCIATES RATHER THAN OF TURBAY HIMSELF. I HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT IN SUCH A MEETING THERE WOULD BE FURTHER DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN TURBAY AND THE AID DIRECTOR CONCERNING AN EXTENSION OF OUR AID PROGRAM HERE UNDER A TURBAY PRESIDENCY. I HAVE TOLD THE AID DIRECTOR TO DEFER ANY SUCH MEETING UNTIL SOME LATER TIME WHEN TURBAY'S ELECTION AS PRESIDENT BECOMES DEFINITE AND FORMALLY ANNOUNCED BY THE ELECTORAL COURT. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THE OUTCOME OF THEN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS STILL SOMEWHAT UNCERTAIN AND THOUGH I PERSONALLY EXPECT THAT TURBAY WILL BE THE WINNER THERE IS AN ESTABLISHED PROCEDURE OF VERIFICATION OF THE ELECTORAL RESULTS THAT HAS TO BE GONE THROUGH BEFORE HE CAN BE OFFICIALLY PRO-
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CLAIMED. (THIS PROCEDURE IS DESCRIBED IN BOGOTA 5408.)

2. UNTIL THE OUTCOME BECOMES OFFICIAL, IT SEEMS TO ME CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT THAT THE USG AND THE EMBASSY REFRAIN WHEREVER POSSIBLE FROM TREATING OR CONTACTING TURBAY AS IF HE WERE IN FACT OFFICIALLY THE NEW PRESIDENT-ELECT. IT IS NOT HARD FOR ME TO IMAGINE

THAT NEWS OF A MEETING BETWEEN OUR AID DIRECTOR AND
TURBAY WOULD BE LEAKED AND/OR PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS
AND BE POINTED TO BY TURBAY'S SUPPORTERS AS AT
LEAST IMPLICIT USG RECOGNITION OF TURBAY'S VICTORY.
THE REACTION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND OF OTHER
ELEMENTS OF COLOMBIAN OPINION TO SUCH A DEVELOPMENT CAN WELL BE
IMAGINED. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES ONE COULD CONCEIVABLY ARGUE
THAT SUCH A MEETING WAS INFORMAL, PRELIMINARY OR
UNOFFICIAL. I DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WOULD BE
VERY CONVINCING. MOREOVER, I EXPECT THAT SUCH A
DISCUSSION BETWEEN MEGELLAS AND TURBAY WOULD IN FACT
ALMOST INEVITABLY BE SUBSTANTIVE IN CHARACTER AND
THAT WE WOULD BE PRESENTED WITH PROPOSALS OR IDEAS
TO WHICH WE WOULD BE EXPECTED TO REACT OR COMMENT
OFFICIALLY.

3. FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE IN FACT ALREADY
HAD ADEQUATE PRELIMINARY EXCHANGES WITH TURBAY ON THIS SUBJECT
IN THE COURSE OF NORMAL CONTACT THAT THE AMBASSADOR
AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICIALS HAD WITH HIM AND OTHER
LEADING CANDIDATES BEFORE THE ELECTION TOOK PLACE.
THOSE SOUNDINGS WERE PROPER AT THAT TIME. NOW I
THINK THE PROPER THING TO DO IS TO WAIT UNTIL THE
ELECTION OF TURBAY IS CONFIRMED. AT MOST, THIS IS
LIKELY TO BE NO MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS OFF AND
AFTER THAT TIME WE SHOULD HAVE AMPLE AND A SUFFICIENTLY TIMELY
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OPPORTUNITY FOR SERIOUS AND CONSTRUCTIVE EXCHANGES WITH HIM
ON THAT SUBJECT.
DREXLER

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